

Children, Youth & Family Consortium

CYFC Monthly

CYFC Monthly – February 2014

Help Wanted: Bridging the Gap to Answer the "How"

Lately you can't run across the phrase "early childhood development" without also seeing terms like "brain architecture", "strong foundations," and "toxic stress." Despite the influx of up-to-date research information about the science of early childhood into the public consciousness, in many cases there's still a classic research and practice gap between what we know theoretically about young children and what we do in practice.

This gap is due in large part to the sizable disconnect between theoretical truths and on-the-ground reality. Children and families who are under-resourced and heavily stressed are arguably the ones most in need of support and care. However, these children and families are also the most complicated and challenging for practitioners to work with effectively. Unfortunately, most early childhood research is not sufficiently nuanced to effectively inform the complexities of working with families enduring intense trauma and stress. Though this gap has improved in recent years with the introduction of more "evidence-based" programs and a focus on trauma-informed practices, many practitioners are still left with a lot of "how" questions, especially when working with children and families who have the most pervasive needs.

- *How do I work with young children in my care who are facing challenges way beyond their years?*
- *How do I build strong relationships with these children to help promote their health and wellbeing in the face of adversity?*
- *How do I work with systems that are in place to best support these children and their families to grow and learn?*

Though I don't claim to have all of the answers, I hope to tackle some of those "how" questions in a book I'm currently writing for [Redleaf Press](#). The book is an effort to connect research and practice to address how early care providers can work with children in their care who have been through big challenges early and often in their young lives.

But my own knowledge of early childhood development can only take me so far. That's why I need your input, your experience, and your expertise to really bring this information to life by pairing science with reality in a meaningful and deep way.

As a part of my research for this book, I'm reaching out to care providers and other practitioners who work with young children to request input and expertise. I'm looking for practical insights and stories I can use to provide real life illustrations or examples of the research I discuss in the book.

Specifically I'm looking for stories; stories of kids and families you've worked with through difficult challenges like foster care, parental incarceration, military deployment, abuse, or domestic violence. Maybe you know this child was experiencing really big challenges and trauma. Maybe you don't know the details. Maybe you suspected something was going on in this child's life. Maybe you've got some really great ideas for how

other providers like you can work with children who are facing these kinds of challenges. These are the kinds of stories that I'm looking for to help build the best resource possible.

I know your wealth of experience will help strengthen the stories and practical information I am striving to communicate to other care providers who work tirelessly day in and day out to improve the lives of children in their care. I'm hoping with your help, I can bring together research and practice in a meaningful and useful way to begin to answer at least a few of the lingering "how" questions.

Please provide your input by **filling out this survey**. The survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. The deadline is February 28th, and **just for filling out the survey you'll be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 Visa gift card**. ***All identifying information shared will be changed to protect the children and families in your care, and you will have the opportunity to approve the final story before it appears in the book.***

Please forward this message on to anyone you know who might also have stories to share.

Thank you for taking the time to weigh in on this important topic. I appreciate your willingness to share your experiences to enhance this book.

Sara Langworthy, PhD
Policy Coordinator

Consortium News

Minnesota Social Worker Input Needed

Are you a social worker in Minnesota? We are interested in learning more from school and county social workers about what barriers might exist for serving children who have interacted with the child welfare system in Minnesota. Please take five minutes to fill out this brief survey [no longer active] and tell us what barriers exist in your work.

University and Community Announcements

Minnesota Children & Nature Connection 2014 Brown Bag Lunch Series

Time: 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Location: REI Bloomington

750 W. American Blvd, Bloomington MN 55420

Cost: Free, no registration necessary

Date: March 14 — Nature's Connection to Mental Health

The first bimonthly brown-bag seminar of the MN Children and Nature Connection will focus on children's mental health and nature. CYFC's [Judy Myers](#), Mental Health Coordinator and [Cathy Jordan](#), Director, will provide research-based information about the impact of nature experiences on promoting children's emotional well-being (improve focus, enhance mood, decrease stress) and in treating mental health disorders in children (such as ADHD, depression and anxiety). Attendees will reflect on how they can enhance their own practice to better utilize nature to enhance children's mental health.

Future events in the series include:

- May 9: How to of Nature Play: Practical Tips for Engaging Kids in Nature

- July 11: Family Nature Clubs: Resources for Starting a Club, Partnering with Park Agencies and Getting Involved in Existing Clubs
- September 23-26: MN Recreation & Park Association Annual Conference (at the National Sport Center in Blaine)
- November: Professional Workshop, topic and details TBD.

Contact [Cathy Jordan](#) for questions.

University & Community Announcements

2014 Schoolyard Gardens Conference — Cultivating the Future

[Minnesota Landscape Arboretum](#)

Date: February 28, 2014

Time: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Cost: \$60 - \$70

Location: Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

3675 Arboretum Drive, Chaska MN 55318

Learn how to create or revive a schoolyard garden while giving students a hands-on learning opportunity to meet state learning standards, engage with communities, partner with businesses and learn about healthy eating. [The Schoolyard Gardens Conference](#) showcases best practices and policies for ensuring student success and whole-child development through the garden. Explore the wealth of school gardens through the [Poster Session](#), learn about national trends, and visit the "Answer Room" for your questions and connecting the school garden to curriculum.

Closing the Achievement Gap: Early Experiences that Matter

[MomEnough Podcast](#)

Andre Dukes, Director of Family Academy for the [Minneapolis Northside Achievement Zone](#) (NAZ) joins [MomEnough for a podcast](#) discussing how the early months and years of life shape a child's health, learning and development forever.

What Went Wrong? Reflecting and Learning from Community Engaged-Research — Call for Proposals

Members of the Twin Cities metropolitan area (Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota) in conjunction with the University of Minnesota are convening the first ever [“What Went Wrong?” Conference](#) from July 11-12, 2014, dedicated to understanding and enhancing community-engaged research practices by examining mistakes and mis-steps. The goal is to provide a participatory space for community members, community-based organizations, youth researchers, and University researchers committed to deep community engagement to gain clarity about their work. Submit your proposal by 7:00 pm March 29, 2014 [link no longer active].

PACER Center Benefit featuring Diana Ross

Date: May 3, 2014

Time: 6:00 pm

Cost: \$70 and up

Location: Minneapolis Convention Center

PACER Center will be hosting its [annual benefit](#) May 3, 2014 and will include a silent auction, a performance by Diana Ross and Patron Party. Proceeds of the [benefit](#) will support the programs, workshops

and individual assistance PACER provides to families of children and young adults with disabilities.

Crisis Prevention Workshop — How to Handle a Mental Health Crisis: A Parents Guide
[Hennepin County Children's Mental Health Collaborative — Parent Catalyst Leadership Group](#)

Date: March 15, 2014

Time: 9:30 am - 12:00 pm

Learn about the services and supports that are available to families in crisis. Speakers from Child Crisis, Brooklyn Park Police and NAMI Hennepin will help families learn about how to respond to emergencies and how to avoid future crises. Hosted by the Parent Catalyst Leadership Group (PCLG) of the Hennepin County Children's Mental Health Collaborative. This event is free, but please register at hcpclg@yahoo.com.

Job Opportunities

- Executive Director - myHealth for Teens and Young Adults [no longer active]
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